

Victoria and California Announce International Collaboration To Advance Stem Cell Research toward Cures

Posted: June 18, 2008

SAN DIEGO, Calif., June 18, 2008 The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's stem cell agency, and the government of the Australian state of Victoria announced today an international collaboration on stem cell research.

The announcement was made at the BIO International Convention in San Diego, Calif. by Victoria Premier, John Brumby, the state's minister for Innovation, Gavin Jennings, Dr. Alan Trounson, president of CIRM and Robert N. Klein, chairman of the governing board of CIRM.

CIRM and Victoria are laying the foundation for an arrangement under which they will jointly seek grant applications, evaluate them, and make recommendations for funding research activities. The initial avenue for collaboration will be the CIRM Disease Team grants. These grants will provide an opportunity for researchers in California and Victoria to collaborate, broadening the potential pool of expertise that can be applied toward research in a specific area.

The Disease Team Awards will support multi-disciplinary teams of scientists in pursuit of therapies for specific diseases. The goal is to fund the work of disease teams that would result in a therapy or diagnostic for a particular disease or serious injury.

"Victoria and California are world leaders in biotechnology and stem cell research," Mr. Brumby said. "The stem cell alliance builds on existing links between California and Victoria in information and communications technology and climate change. We are two of the world's leading jurisdictions in tackling the leading global issues and we share the common goal of helping our best and brightest to tackle these issues."

"One of CIRM's primary goals is to accelerate the field of stem cell research as a whole and in some instances we can do this more effectively through collaborations that involve the best scientific endeavors, regardless of geography" said Dr. Trounson. "Through this relationship, CIRM money will continue to be earmarked only for research that takes place within California, but we can expand and coordinate our overall efforts in certain areas through collaborative efforts funded by our colleagues in Australia."

"By collaborating with the world's largest stem cell organisation, Victoria will continue to build its leadership position in stem cell research and pioneering new treatments," said Mr. Jennings. "We have led this field from the very start with Alan Trounson's pioneering work in IVF and, in recent times, the discovery of breast stem cells at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute. But no jurisdiction can do it alone, so it makes sense to connect with powerful partners such as California."

"This launches a 'stem cell air bridge' between California and Australia and this scientific alliance advances the already strong network of relationships many California scientists have with colleagues in Australia, stated Robert N. Klein, chairman of the governing board of CIRM. "Our goal is to shorten the time that it takes to drive discoveries into the clinic and to patients and one way to do this is by extending collaborations such as this, and the one announced today with the Cancer Stem Cell Consortium of Canada. This collaboration between the State of Victoria and the State of California brings together two of the world's leading governmental funders of stem cell research to push forward the frontier of stem cell science."

About CIRM: The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) was established in 2005 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 168 research and facility grants totaling more than \$530 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human stem cell research in the world. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

About research in Victoria Victoria is home to more than 43 per cent of Australia's medical research activity including specialist stem cell centres such as the Australian Stem Cell Centre, Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratory and the Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute.

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